



Ministry Shares “Re-imagined”

Synod 2019 adopted, in principle, a Ministry Shares report, which lays out a significantly revised ministry-shares process. A summary of those revisions appears below. It is the intent of Synod 2019 that these changes be considered, and responses (by overture or communication) be submitted to the executive director by March 15, so that Synod 2020 can approve the changes. Please note that until Synod 2020 takes action, the system will remain as it has been.

What Changes Are Being Proposed in the Reimagined Program?

- Synod will no longer set a per member suggested amount.
- Instead, as part of their budgeting process, each congregation will be asked to prayerfully consider how much they can covenant to contribute to ministry shares each year. General guidance for making this decision will be developed by denominational staff, endorsed by the Council of Delegates (COD), and sent to the churches and classis treasurers in July of each year. In addition, congregations will have access to their previous ministry share and offering giving to help them make their decisions.
- Congregational commitments will be gathered by each classis and discussed at the fall classis meeting. This will allow classes to be aware of contribution pledges coming from their region. It will also allow churches to discuss how the overall pledge amount from the classis can be maximized.
- Each classis will decide if emerging churches should be encouraged to contribute to ministry shares.
- Each classis will forward their congregations' pledges to the denominational offices. A preliminary budget for the institutions, agencies and ministries will be set based on what is pledged. This budget will be finalized at the May COD meeting each year.

What Isn't Changing?

- Ministry shares are a covenant commitment between all members of the CRCNA.
- Ministry shares allow every CRC member and every CRC congregation - no matter what their size or financial capacity - to be part of shared ministry around the world.
- The ministries funded by ministry shares were created on behalf of CRC members through actions of synod to meet various CRC needs and concerns including global and local mission, Christian media outreach, abuse prevention, faith formation, racial reconciliation, and much more.
- Ministry shares are also used to fund Calvin University. As is currently the case, in some regions, a reduction of this portion of ministry shares is recommended so that some of those monies can be allocated to Reformed educational institutions in the area. Guidance about this will be provided.
- CRCNA ministries will continue to be stewardly with all donations received and will use them to fulfil the core mandates that they were given by synod.
- Ministry shares will continue to be an efficient and cost-effective way to doing ministry together.

Keep in mind:

- If Synod 2020 adopts these revisions, the process of recruiting church pledges will begin in the fall of 2020. This will influence a draft budget presented to the COD in May 2021 to begin in July 2021.

Can my church direct how its ministry share dollars are used?

- This question has become increasingly common in recent years, as different congregations feel more or less connected to specific CRCNA ministries. The short answer to this is yes. Typically, ministry shares are received as a lump sum and are distributed to ministries according to the

annual budget allocations approved by the COD. If a congregation asks that a larger percentage of their gift be put towards a specific ministry, that request has always and will continue to be honored.

What if churches pledge significantly less than what they currently give to ministry shares?

- This is the question on many of our hearts. The ministries of our denomination were started by our churches and we covenanted together to fund them by using ministry shares, but what if people's financial commitment to that covenant isn't what it has been in the past? The answer to this is two-fold.
- On the one hand, you need to know that the current ministry shares model has flaws. Synod sets a per-member allocation amount and asks churches to contribute accordingly, but fewer congregations have been contributing 100% of this request. As a result, the agencies of the CRCNA plan on receiving less than what was asked, and decrease their expectations every year. This can leave ministries scrambling if funds don't arrive. The proposed system will base budgets on the pledges received from churches.
- Secondly, if the pledged amounts are significantly different than current program budgets, there is a process in place to help figure out what changes in programs or personnel would have to occur. This would be done in line with COD policies and is the same system that would be used if there was a recession or other significant economic event to manage.

Why are we making changes to the ministry share program?

- We are considering making this change to the ministry share system for a few key reasons, including the important one that Synod 2016 asked the denominational staff to reimagine the ministry share system, and Synod 2019 adopted - in principle - this approach.
- It is also important to know that the current system has been under stress for some years. Over the past decade, there has been a recurring annual reduction in the total ministry share dollars received to fund the programs synod established.
- The current system makes requests of each congregation based on the number of active adult professing members at the organized church. While this is one way of determining the request made of each church, it makes the assumption that the number of members is directly correlated to the financial capacity of a church. In fact, many small churches have been blessed financially more than some large churches. As a result, while synod sets a per member ministry share rate, many churches are not giving to ministry shares at that suggested level. Since the annual program budgets are set well before ministry share dollars come in, it becomes a bit of a guessing game to determine program expenditures should be to stay within the revenues received.
- The new proposed system puts the local church at the start of the annual budget process. This is much more in alignment with our church polity. Under the reimagined ministry share proposal, the local church pledges what it is prepared to contribute to the program of the denomination and the budgets will be set based on this pledge.

Will my church's ministry year need to change to match the CRCNA fiscal year?

- No. Many churches currently have a ministry and fiscal year that does not match the fiscal year schedule of CRCNA agencies. This is OK and can continue with the "reimagined" proposal. Congregations would be asked, however, to make their pledge amounts known in fall of each year and to send their ministry share gifts to the denominational offices as they are collected.